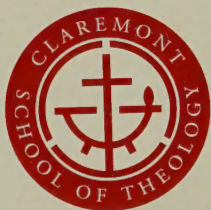


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THE
JOHN C. GRAY
The Zion
Commonwealth

Incorporated



Zionist Organization
of America

CLP

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The image shows three groups of three-dimensional dot patterns on a green background. Each group consists of three dots arranged in a triangular shape, with a fourth dot placed below the center of the triangle. The first group is labeled '2', the second '3', and the third '4'.

The Zion Commonwealth

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"We, the members and shareholders of the Zion Commonwealth, Inc., have organized and established this company for the purpose of aiding in the settlement of Jews in Palestine, and of securing for our members and their descendants rights, interests and privileges in lands occupied by the Zion Commonwealth, Inc., to the end that social justice, in harmony with the ideals of the prophets of Israel, may be the cornerstone of the Jewish Commonwealth in Zion."—Preamble to the Constitution of the Zion Commonwealth.

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The Zion Commonwealth

BY BERNARD A. ROSENBLATT

On September 10, 1914, the State of New York granted a charter of incorporation to the Zion Commonwealth, Inc., organized for the purpose of purchasing and developing land in Palestine with a view of establishing colonies of Jews. The company was formed as a business corporation, aiming to hold its officials and directors strictly accountable on the business basis of profit and loss; and yet it embodies a great social ideal as the foundation for all its future activities.

The famous East India Company, beginning as a stock corporation of traders and merchants in the Sixteenth Century, succeeded in winning an Empire for Great Britain and fortunes for its investors. There is a valuable lesson in the history of the English East India Company which we cannot afford to ignore. Holding firmly to the solid foundation of business enterprise, this unique joint stock company resolved to include in its program *political* power as a bulwark and defence for its economic interests. Its extraordinary success was due to the fact that in all its political activity the business element was never neglected.

The organizers of the Zion Commonwealth, Inc., have no desire to imitate the careers of the founders of the East India Company. We have no longing to live on the luxuries secured by the toil of conquered subjects. But we hope to build up a successful company, similar in its careful observance of business rules, yet altogether different in its aims and methods.

We propose to use it as a means to stimulate the ideal of social justice for the settlers whom it will protect and safeguard. Believing that business principles may be utilized for great social ends, we have established the Zion Commonwealth.

The Achooza Movement

In order to comprehend our project, it is necessary to examine several efforts for Jewish colonization in Palestine in the past. American Zionists have learned much about the Achooza movement, which aims to organize groups of prospective Jewish settlers, who save their contributions over a period of ten years, for the purpose of buying and developing land in Palestine with the object of establishing themselves as colonists. The Achoozas are only natural outgrowths of the M'Noocha V'Nachla and similar societies of Russia, organized under the influence of the Chovevei Zion in the last two decades of the Nineteenth Century. From 1880 until 1894, Russian Jewish students and idealistic business men organized groups

of these "Lovers of Zion" who are responsible for practically all the successful Jewish Colonies in Palestine at the present time. In actual concrete results and in the possibilities for the future of Palestine, these outgrowths of the Chovevei Zion movement—the true precursor of modern Zionism—are no less significant than Zionism itself, as an organized force.

The Achoozas in the United States—besides giving us the name "Achooza"—have added one important factor to the work of the M'Noocha V'Nachla and the settlements of the Chovevei Zion. I refer to the adoption of the business principle of slowly accumulating a fund, over a period of ten years, so that even the poor man may invest his savings until he has sufficient capital to live as a farmer in Palestine. Furthermore, while his savings increase year by year, the land is being prepared and improved for ultimate settlement.

The reader will discern in the Chovevei Zion movement (including the Achooza), a great love for the land of our forefathers and a firm resolve, on the part of a large section in Jewry, to re-settle Palestine. But this movement has failed to take to heart the lessons of modern social development. We are the heirs to the learning and experience of Western Europe and America. It is but right that we profit from this experience, so that our community will not commit the errors of democratic England and America. We should endeavor, as nearly as possible,

to foster the growth of a model Commonwealth in Palestine, accepting those social reforms for which modern industrial development has prepared us. While we cannot bind ourselves to accept the radical formulas of different Philosophical schools (whether socialistic or individualistic), we wish to grasp every opportunity so to *build our commonwealth in Zion that it may grow, as an institution, for the attainment and maintenance of Social Justice.*

Agricultural Land Certificates

With this end in view, the Zion Commonwealth has adopted a definite, clear and simple program. It proposes to sell one, and only one, share of its capital stock (at five dollars per share) to every Jew who will subscribe to certain Land Certificate Agreements issued by the company. These Land Certificates, of the par value of two hundred and fifty (\$250) dollars each, require the holder to pay into the treasury of the company ten (\$10) dollars every three months for a period of six years. The company, on its part, agrees to give him possession of cultivated agricultural land in Palestine. The agreement between the company and the shareholders provides that the land *allotted to the individual must be utilized strictly and solely for the purpose of farming (agriculture and grazing)—and not for industrial activities, as town lots, hotels and manufacturing plants, or mineral exploitation.*

At least ten per cent of all lands purchased by the company will not be divided among individuals but will be retained as "public lands" for industrial uses, including the development of cities and villages. A portion of this territory will be utilized by the company for any activities in industry, commerce or education which it might undertake for the benefit of its members, while other plots will be leased to individuals for industrial purposes (such as town dwellings, factories, stores and hotels), the lessee being assessed annually certain "ground rents" for the use of such land. By this simple arrangement, the community will receive the profits due to the concentration of population and the growth of industry. The rewards that now so often go to absentee landlords will be diverted to the treasury of the company for the equal benefit of the members, and to the settlers will be offered the opportunity of developing model towns and cities, unhampered by the greed of landlords and the unregulated influx of tenants. The community will be able to adopt a program of "town planning" and "garden cities" as a valuable part of its activities.

In short, the plan of the company offers to each member farming land in proportion to his investment, and to all residents of the Zion Commonwealth territory equal participation in the profits and benefits of mineral and urban lands held by the company.

The Zion Commonwealth is preparing the ground for the establishment of a true democracy of Jewish citizens. The shareholders of the Zion Commonwealth will be able to become part of the Palestinian Community and undertake municipal and rural activity on the basis of Jewish citizenship, every member having one vote irrespective of the number of acres of agricultural land which he may possess.

Furthermore, no attempt will be made to limit the individual in his business activity and ample opportunity will be given him for the possession and cultivation of his agricultural land. Each shareholder may subscribe for an amount not exceeding fifty Certificates. All the money received as instalments on Land Certificates is kept as a separate fund under the control of trustees.

The voluntary basis of our Commonwealth is preserved by a rule permitting any shareholder to surrender his share and Land Certificates at any time, which the Company will redeem by the payment, on six months' notice, of between eighty (80) and ninety per cent (90%) of all the moneys received from such individual on Land Certificates. (The remainder, together with the value of the share of stock will be construed as compensation to the company for expenses incurred.) Whenever any holder of Land Certificates is in arrears, he must pay a fine of one cent per day on each overdue Land Certificate.

Any shareholder, after receiving his allotment of land in Palestine in exchange for the Land Certificates, may sublease his agricultural land to the Zion Commonwealth, for a term of not more than four years, with the understanding that the lessor will receive all the profits that may accrue from such lands, over and above the expenses actually incurred for the management of the estate. If, however, by the end of this period, the shareholder does not settle permanently in Palestine, then the lands allotted to him revert to the Company, and the shareholder receives in return preferred shares of stock of the Zion Commonwealth, Inc., guaranteeing an annual income of five per cent (5%) on the amounts he has invested in his land certificates. Such a provision makes it possible for us to obtain the support even of those who do not expect to settle in Palestine, but who are willing and able to invest some money in the form of one or more Land Certificates to help the settlement of Palestine and its development by Russian, Polish and other Jewish refugees as well as other actual settlers.

It is estimated that the income derived from the ownership and cultivation of land, obtained through the purchase of ten (10) Land Certificates, will be sufficient to support a family. Those who subscribe for fewer than ten (10) Land Certificates, although they may not be able to support themselves solely by working these smaller tracts, may derive some substantial addition

to their income from the ownership of "Garden Farms."

Such a program offers us an opportunity for the upbuilding of a great Jewish National Land Company. At the present time, the Achoozas work in haphazard fashion, each purchasing its own land with little regard for any general plan of development. The Zion Commonwealth, Inc., will concentrate the funds of such Achoozas as may unite with it, in order to enable the company to carry out a careful plan of Jewish colonization. Instead of numerous unrelated groups who look forward to ultimate colonization in Palestine, we are creating one comprehensive organization for the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Zion.

We are making rapid progress in Zionism. There was a time when the payment of the shekel was regarded as a fulfillment of Zionist duties. Now, no right thinking Jewish Nationalist is satisfied until he becomes an active instrument in the Regeneration of Palestine. The Zion Commonwealth offers the opportunity for every Jew to acquire a piece of land in the domains of our forefathers—a share in the Land of Israel.

Directly involved in the question of propaganda for the Zion Commonwealth is the proposition, endorsed at a joint meeting of the Palestine Bureau and the Board of Directors of the Zion Commonwealth held on December 11, 1917, for the gradual mobilization of a Jewish Industrial Army for Palestine, as put forth by the Zion Com-

monwealth in May, 1917, and formally presented in the Palestine Bureau pamphlet for October, 1917. Not only Jewish workmen but diverse groups are seeking for the recruiting agency which should enlist them as volunteers in the Pioneer Industrial Army for Palestine. In the Palestine Bureau, we have registered hundreds who are ready to leave for Palestine on order from our General Staff—the Zionist Organization. It is for us to so organize this army that it shall prove a benefit rather than a detriment. We must organize not only to encourage the immigration of Jews into Palestine, but, what is perhaps just as important, to so regulate the flow of immigration that we may select those who are necessary for our great national purpose. Entrance into Palestine is a privilege which should be offered to those who can be of value to the realization of the Zionist ideal. The details should be worked out by the Zionist Organization, but any such policy serves to enlarge the Zion Commonwealth into a truly national organization, so that thousands of American Jews might invest funds for land purchase in Palestine. These Jews would be in a position analogous to the Babylonian Jews who did not “go up” in response to the call of Cyrus, but who gave their wealth that their brethren might rebuild the second Temple.

The lands of all these persons who would not return to Palestine would be turned over, on the basis of a fair net income to

the member, for occupation and development by such a Jewish Industrial Army. Under the guidance of competent agriculturalists and efficient administrators, who will serve as the captains and generals of this army, all the resources, energy and ability of its members would be utilized to procure sufficient income, in the first instance, for the support of the families of the Jewish Industrial Army. All the annual surplus profits—after a reasonable percentage will have been set aside as a replacement fund and as an accumulated reserve—would be divided on a profit sharing basis between the Zion Commonwealth and the members of the Jewish Industrial Army. In short, a Jewish Industrial Army will afford us the opportunity for developing in Palestine a valuable co-operative institution, based upon Jewish labor. It will safeguard the principle of a "Jewish Palestine," by assuring us a large Jewish labor supply in the Land of Israel.

It is our firm purpose to enlist in our ranks all those who see in Zionism not only a political program but also a social ideal.

For full information apply to the

ZION COMMONWEALTH, INC.

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The Zionist Organization of America

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